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ABSTRACT

The primary goal of this study was to evaluate two of the Upward Bound (UB) program's major objectives: (1) increasing the high school completion rate of its participants, and (2) increasing the rate of entry of its participants into postsecondary institutions. Evaluation of attainment of actual skills and motivation was a secondary goal of the study. Another secondary goal was to provide a detailed national description of the UB program. Major findings were as follows. The UB program participants did not exhibit an increased rate of high school completion. High school completion, however, was reasonably high for both the UB student sample and a comparison group of similar non-UB students. There was no apparent relationship between UB participation and improvement on measures of academic performance. The UB program does appear to be increasing entry into postsecondary education. Rate of entry to postsecondary education was found to be positively related to length of participation in UB. About 76 percent of the UB students beginning postsecondary education entered four-year colleges and universities; about 17 percent entered two-year colleges; and the rest entered vocational, trade, or other schools. (Author/JM)

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Evaluation of the Upward Bound Program

October 1976

ULD 016617

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation of the Upward Bound Program

Background and Purpose

Under authority of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2809), the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) funded 17 Upward Bound (UB) projects as a pilot program in the summer of 1965. In 1966, UB was authorized as a national program under Title II-A of the Economic Opportunity Act. On July 1, 1969, responsibility for the program was transferred from OEO to the U.S. Office of Education (USOE), Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Currently, UB is authorized under section 408 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 1068).

UB was designed to reach low-income high school students who have potential for successfully completing a postsecondary program but who, due to inadequate preparation or lack of motivation, are prevented from seeking higher education or from meeting conventional criteria for admission to a college, university, or technical institute. Through the use of remedial instruction, exposure to new or altered curricula, tutoring, cultural enrichment, and counseling, the program is designed to generate in such individuals the skills and motivation necessary to enter and successfully complete postsecondary education.

During the summer, UB students typically reside on a college, university, or secondary school campus for an intensive six to eight week session, taking courses, attending cultural and social events, and receiving counseling. In the academic year, they typically receive less intensive attention: they may attend Saturday classes, attend periodic tutorial/counselling sessions, or participate in occasional cultural enrichment activities. During their junior and senior years of high school, they receive guidance in exploring options for postsecondary preparation and the program best suited to their needs.

In July 1973, USOE contracted with Research Triangle Institute of North Carolina to plan and conduct an evaluation of the UB program. Several sources were consulted in designing the study, including the enabling legislation, the official guidelines, selected program personnel, current and former UB staff personnel and students, and study advisory panels.

The primary goal of the study was to evaluate two of the program's major objectives: (1) to increase the high school completion rate of its participants and (2) to increase the rate of entry of its participants into postsecondary institutions. Evaluation of attainment of actual skills and motivation was a secondary goal of the study, primarily because of practical problems involved in determining and measuring the nature and degree of such skills and motivation. Another secondary study goal was to provide a detailed national description of the UB program, including characteristics of the staff

and students, their perceptions of the program, and project operations and costs. Another goal was to examine project characteristics in relation to attainment of project objectives.

Methodology

From all 416 UB projects operating in the United States during the 1973-74 program year, 54 were selected after stratification on student ethnicity, number of students served, project location, type of project, and type of host institution. All participants in the sampled project who were in grades 10, 11, or 12 were selected, yielding 3,710 UB students in the final sample. For each selected UB project, an average of two high schools providing students to that project were selected. From a sample of classrooms in each of these schools, a total of 2,340 comparison students (about 21 per sampled school) were selected after stratification on grade level, ethnicity, low-income status, and academic risk. The final sample of UB project staff included project directors from all 54 selected projects and a sample of 104 counselors and 211 instructors. In addition, 15 of the 54 sampled UB projects were selected for site visit.

Data were collected through questionnaire responses, interview responses, and student records. Very low return rates were experienced with only one student questionnaire, which was directed to dropouts who were difficult to locate and probably less motivated to respond. In total, over 98 percent of students in both the UB and comparison groups responded to at least one questionnaire. The lowest return rate for the staff was 73 percent for UB instructors. Complete staff data (i.e., questionnaires returned by all sampled staff in a project) were available for only one-third of the projects sampled, but in about 70 percent of the projects, questionnaires were available from the project director and from at least half of the sampled counselors and instructors.

In spite of the stratified sampling employed for the selection of comparison students, they were found to be different from the UB students. That is, the comparison group proportionately included fewer ethnic minorities, more males, fewer poverty level students, and more academic risk students. In addition, the age and grade level compositions of the UB and comparison groups were different. In light of these differences, statistical adjustments of the comparison students' measures were employed for all analyses.

Findings

A. Attainment of Basic UB Objectives

1. Increasing the Rate of High School Completion

The fall-to-fall rates of continuance for tenth and eleventh graders and completion for twelfth graders ranged from 85 to 93 percent. The only statistically significant fall-to-fall rate difference was for grade 10, in which the UB students showed higher rates (93 percent versus 86 percent). Further, these rates do not appear to be related to the

extent of UB participation. These analyses do not indicate that the UB program is significantly increasing high school completion among its participants. For UB and similar students, the estimated probability of completion of any high school grade is high (85 percent or above). The expected probability of completing twelfth grade for a student who enters tenth grade is nearly 70 percent.

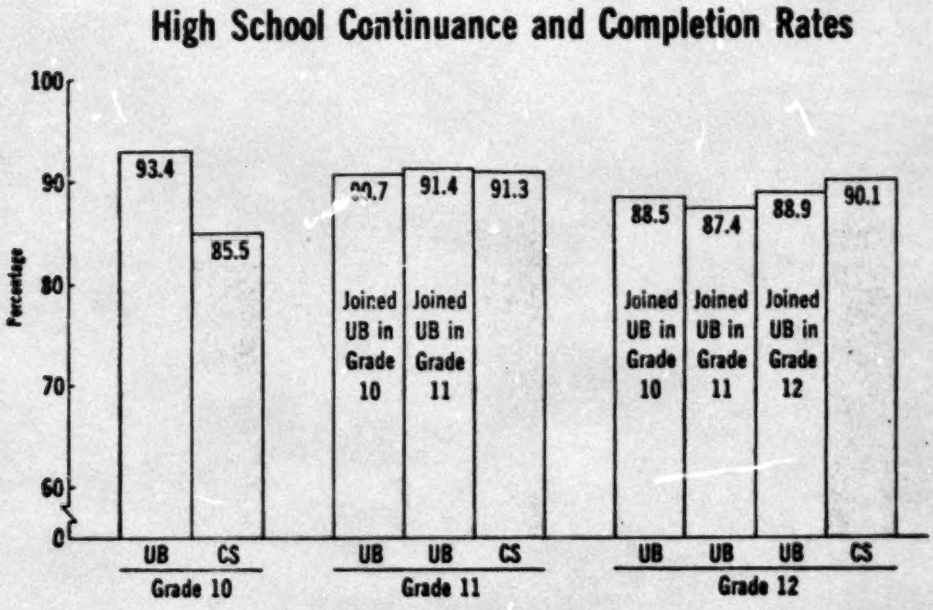

Figure 1

UB denotes Upward Bound

CS denotes comparison students

2. Increasing the Rate of Entry into Postsecondary Education (PSE)

Among high school graduates in the class of 1974, 47 percent of the comparison students entered PSE as compared to 71 percent of the UB participants. Among all individuals who could have entered PSE (i.e., high school graduates and dropouts), 65 percent of UB students entered PSE as compared to 43 percent of comparison students. There is also evidence that among high school graduates, PSE entry rate is positively related to length of participation in the UB program. That is, 78 percent of the students participating in UB in grades 10 through 12 entered PSE, 69 percent of the students participating in UB in grades 11 and 12 entered PSE, and 68 percent of the students

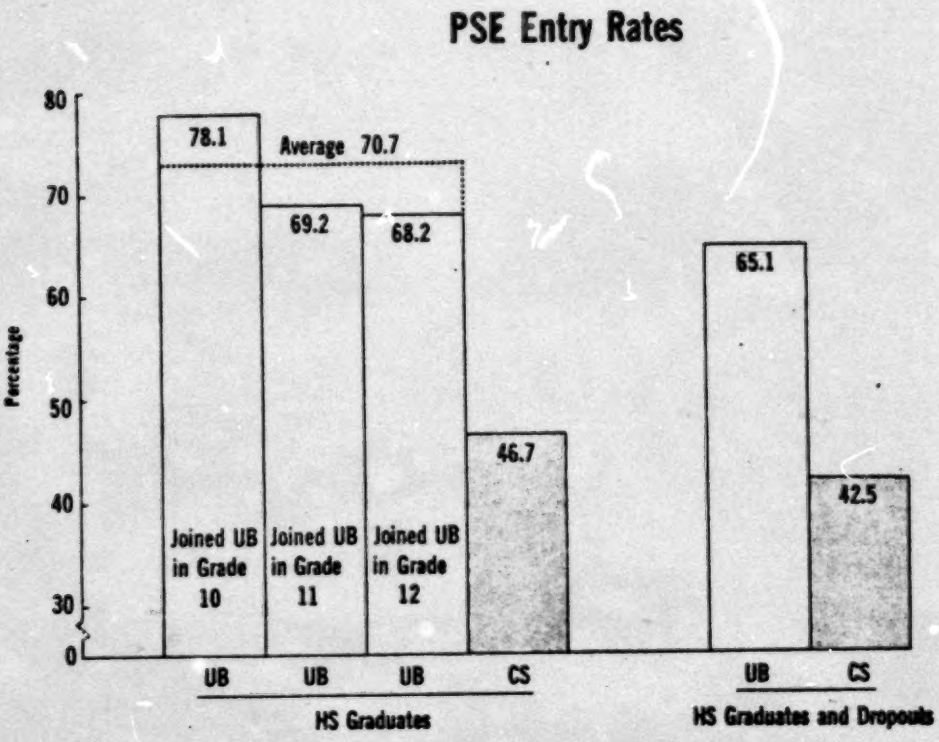

Figure 2

UB denotes Upward Bound

CS denotes comparison students

participating in UB in grade 12 entered PSE. Of those UB students entering PSE institutions, about 76 percent enrolled in four-year colleges or universities, about 17 percent entered two-year junior or community colleges, and the remaining students entered vocational, trade, or other schools; comparable figures for the comparison group were about 45, 31, and 24 percent, respectively.

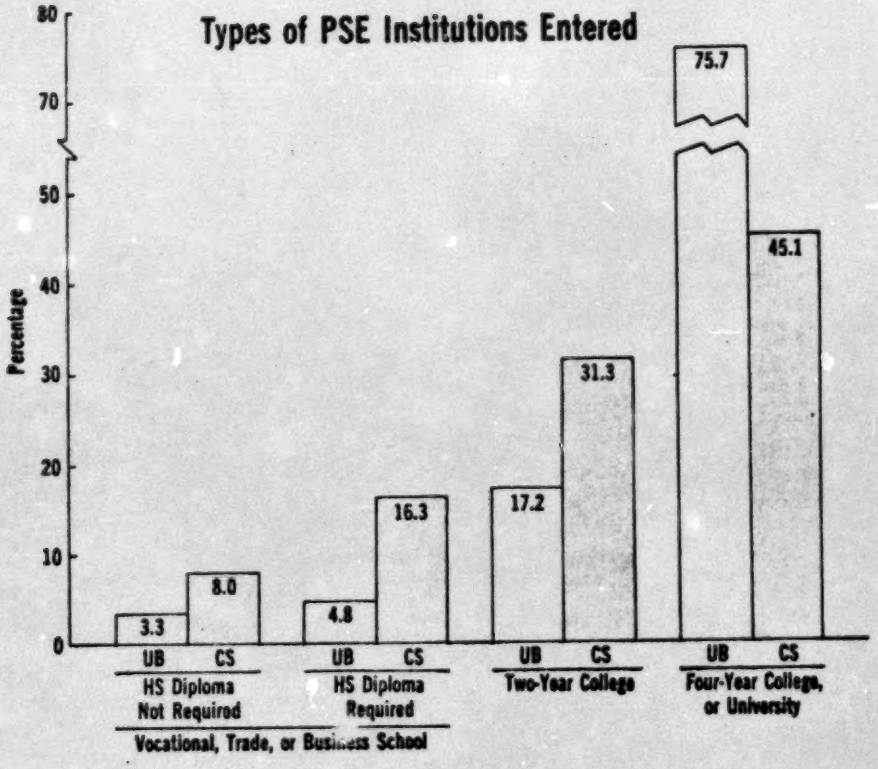

Figure 3

UB denotes Upward Bound

CS denotes comparison students

3. Generating Skills and Motivation Necessary for Success in Education Beyond High School

Analyses indicated the UB program helps students in preparation for PSE, including the applications process. The data further indicated that proportionally more UB than comparison students apply for financial aid. Although UB aid applicants do not receive more offers of aid, they do receive more adequate offers, generally in the form of larger grants.

Sources of Offered Financial Aid

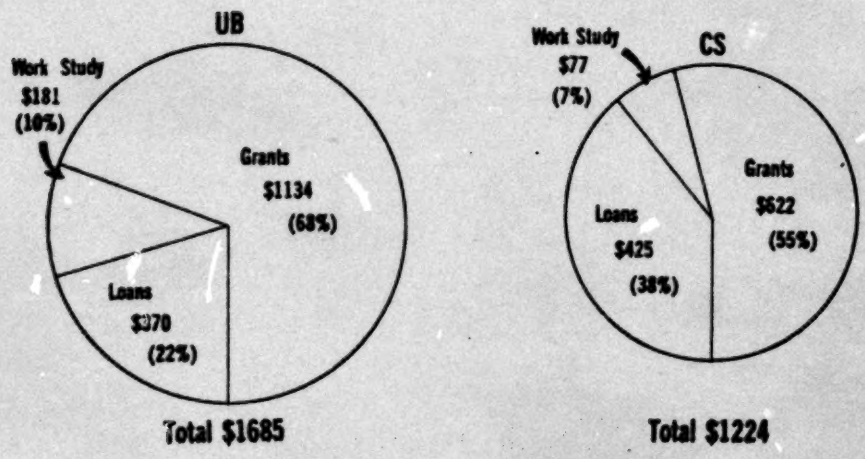

Figure 4

UB denotes Upward Bound

CS denotes comparison students

There was no apparant relationship between UB participation and changes in academic measures from ninth grade to current grade in terms of grade point average, proportion of academic credits taken, and academic credits passed. There is evidence, however, that greater proportions of UB participants planned and expected to attend and complete PSE. These results suggest that the UB program is providing supportive, advocacy, and advisory services that facilitate entrance to PSE.

4. Student Evaluations of UB Projects

Students in the UB projects appear positive about the staff and their program experience. The quality of the curriculum, of counseling and tutoring, and of overall administration is perceived as quite high, as is the pattern of staff and student inter-relationships. The self-reports of the students strongly suggest that they are incorporating program objectives into their own behavior, self-concept, and aspirations. The average ratings of academic year program elements were slightly lower than those of comparable elements in the summer program. Students perceived the UB program's day-to-day operations of teaching, counseling, and administration to be well conducted and organized. They considered the best qualities of the program to be the staff's interest in the students and the harmonious relationships

among the staff and among the students. They also prized highly the staff's willingness to accept student suggestions. Of the potential benefits from UB participation, students rated gaining a better understanding of the need for education and being prepared to gain admission to college or other types of schools as being most important. At the same time, not all students find all project activities helpful, as might be expected.

B. Characteristics of UB Projects, Staff, and Students

A major finding, supported by the site visits and the analyses of questionnaire responses, is that UB does not appear to represent a single intervention, or even two or three clearly delineated interventions. Variation, rather than commonality, was the salient aspect of program description for most of the dimensions considered. Within the general limits established by program guidelines, projects varied extensively in the kinds of students served and the ways in which specific intervention strategies were implemented. Pursuit of the general program objectives appeared to be common across projects, but particular objectives and the emphasis given them showed considerable variation among projects.

1. Project Costs

In program year from 1 July 1973 to 30 June 1974, 416 UB projects reported serving 51,755 clients at a cost of $38.3 million. Of the 416 projects, 67 served approximately 12,200 veterans and 9 special demonstration projects served approximately 980 students. The data from the 333 UB "regular" projects showed that approximately 10,733 seniors were served. Approximately 21 percent of these seniors participated in UB in grades 10, 11, and 12; 39 percent participated in UB in grades 11 and 12; and the remaining 40 percent participated in UB only in grade 12. About 7,588 of these seniors directly entered PSE. Considering the differential extent of UB participation for the PSE enrollees, the average cumulative cost (excluding non-Federal contributions) was approximately $3,054 per PSE enrollee. Recalling from figure 2 that about 47 percent of the comparison seniors entered PSE, approximately 4,453 of the UB seniors would have been expected to enter PSE without UB services. That is, UB participation was related to the PSE entry of 3,135 seniors who would not have entered PSE without UB services. For this marginal group of 3,135 seniors who would not have entered PSE without UB services, the average cumulative cost was $7,391. The average yearly total cost per project (excluding in-kind contributions) was $111,986 for the 1973-74 program. For the 1973 summer program, the estimated cost was $63,769 per project or approximately $830 per student served; for the 1973-74 academic year program, the estimated average cost was $51,863 or approximately $700 per student served. Over 90 percent of these monies were contributed by federal sources. There was considerable variation in the cost figures reported for projects. The range of reported total costs, excluding in-kind contributions, was from $9,782 to $175,000 during the summer program and from $19,500 to $134,000 during the academic year. Non-federal support ranged from $0 to well over $100,000 with the most projects reporting no non-federal funding. Projects reported receiving an average of $9,149 worth of in-kind contributions such as office space, facilities, and personnel services, although these estimates may be low.

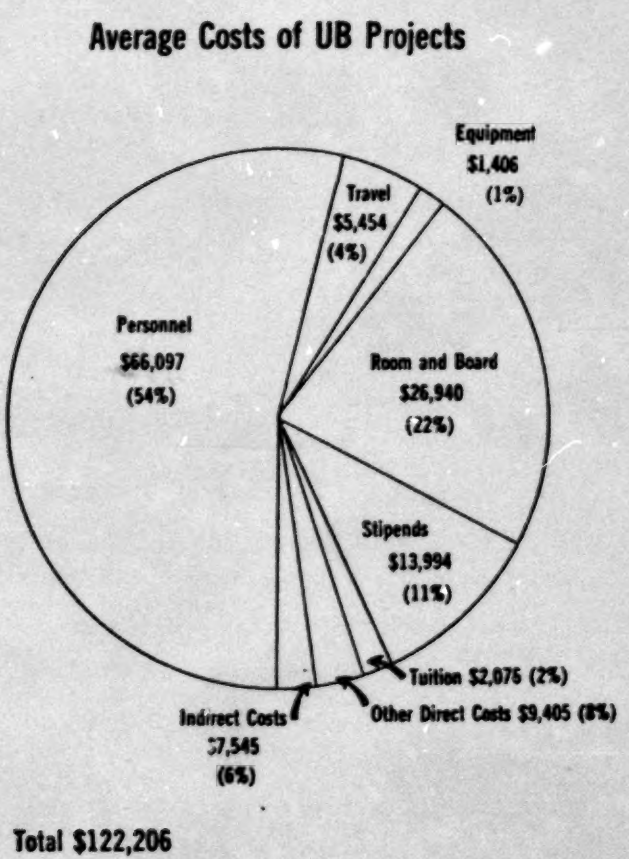

Figure 5

UB denotes Upward Bound

Examinations of project costs and project characteristics indicated the number of students served was positively related to total project costs. These results are not surprising as project funding is determined by a formula which accounts for number of students to be served. No factors were observed that would suggest institutional or urban-rural inequities in funding.

2. Project Activities and Services

A wide range of courses and classes, tutoring and counseling services, sports, social and cultural activities, and medical and dental services were offered by projects during both the summer and academic year programs. Tutoring and counseling services were generally offered by all projects during both sessions, but there was greater variability in the frequency of other activities. A greater variety of courses seemed to be available during the summer program than during the academic year. The activities most commonly available were also characterized by the highest participation rates among those students to whom the activities had been available: and

were considered to be the most helpful among the students who had participated. Although the overall program exhibits considerable variability--particularly in the academic year component--UB seems to be providing and delivering the basic activities required by the guidelines.

3. Relationships with Host Institution and Other Supporting Groups

UB staff reported receiving at least moderately effective support from their host institutions, their advisory committees, and other parent and community groups. The staff and students reported good relationships among themselves, suggesting that in most projects the directors, staff, and students formed a highly cohesive group. Almost all of the project directors rated their host institutions (primarily public and private colleges and universities as being supportive. Evidence of host institution support and commitment to specified projects, and to the UB concept in general, was also obtained in site visits. Directors reported cooperative relationships with other programs for the disadvantaged which operated in their areas (both those administered by the same host institution and those administered by other institutions). UB instructors and counselors also reported receiving a high degree of cooperation from high schools and PSE institutions. Such cooperation is important, since UB projects typically depend on high schools for recruiting students, providing school records, and developing complementary programs of study for students. The projects also depend on PSE institutions for processing applications, granting admission, administering financial aid, and providing for the needs of students in the institutions. Many project directors interviewed during site visits felt the need for more assistance, monitoring, feedback, and direction than they were currently receiving from the central and regional offices of USOE. A common concern across projects and regions was the timing of notification of funding and consequent late funding.

4. Project Staff

On the average, the projects were staffed by one and one-half full-time equivalent (FTE) administrative employees and three FTE support staff during both the academic year and summer programs. The major staffing difference between the two program components was for instructors and counselors, with an FTE average of 4.3 of these service-delivery employees during the academic year and 11.5 during the summer program. There was considerable variation about these average staffing profiles, but no significant associations were found between project staffing patterns and other project characteristics.

Most staff members were young (age 35 or less). Nearly all project directors, and over half of the instructors and counselors, were male. The greatest proportion of project directors were black, while the greatest proportion of instructors and counselors were white. Projects appeared to employ staff of the same ethnicity as the student participants, though

not always in the same proportions. Most of the staff had obtained at least a bachelor's degree, and slightly more than half had obtained a degree at the master's level or higher. In general, the course work and training completed by the UB project staff appeared directly related to their job needs. Over a third of the staff reported current participation in continuing education, and over half had attended workshops on teaching, counseling, or program administration for disadvantaged students. In addition to formal training and education, UB project staff generally had considerable practical experience in their field of work, but less experience working specifically with disadvantaged students.

All staff members, including project directors, performed a number of activities in common, principally, teaching and counseling. Most staff members appeared to be carrying reasonable work loads, and to be directing their energies efficiently. Instruction tended to be oriented toward group discussion or individualized instruction, and competition was de-emphasized.

There was an extremely high degree of agreement in the ratings of educational goals by project directors, counselors, and instructors. In general, the staff agreed that the more important goals of education were developing student enthusiasm for learning, helping students to feel important and providing students with a solid grasp of fundamental skills. Instructors rated the following behaviors to be most important in their teaching: encouraging students to become involved, giving students praise and affection, answering student questions, encouraging students to make choices, and diagnosing individual learning problems.

5. Characteristics and Recruitment of Students

The UB program appeared to be serving the appropriate types of students. About 51 percent of the UB students were black; 18 percent were white; and 20 percent were either American Indians, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, or Orientals. Approximately 56 percent of UB students were females. Approximately 85 percent of the students were 16 to 18 years of age; and approximately 15, 39 and 45 percent were in grades 10, 11, and 12, respectively. Based on ninth grade academic information which was typically prior to UB participation, slightly more than half of the UB students were classified as "academic risks." On an index that is closely related but not identical to federal poverty-level guidelines, approximately two-thirds of the UB students were considered to be at or below poverty level. Only one-half of the parents of UB students had attained a formal education equivalent to or greater than a high school diploma. UB students were seen by directors, instructors, and counselors as most proficient in peer relations and creativity. General academic ability of students was rated to be above average by all staff categories. The lowest ratings were given to student attitudes toward authority and toward school, self-concept, and attention span.

Although most UB students appeared to be the kind for whom the program is intended, the definition of the target group with regard to potential for academic achievement appeared to vary because of lack of specificity, operational feasibility, or differences in interpretation among staff in various projects.

UB students most frequently reported first hearing about the program from other UB students. Other sources from which substantial proportions of students first heard of the program were school guidance counselors, UB staff members, and school teachers. These results support observations that formal student recruitment was carried out in most projects by "contact counselors" in the feeder high schools. Responsibility for the final selection of students, using criteria such as family income, grades and aptitude test scores, teacher and counselor recommendations, evidences of student motivation, and personal intuition, was assumed by UB project directors and staff.

Students' First Source of Information About UB

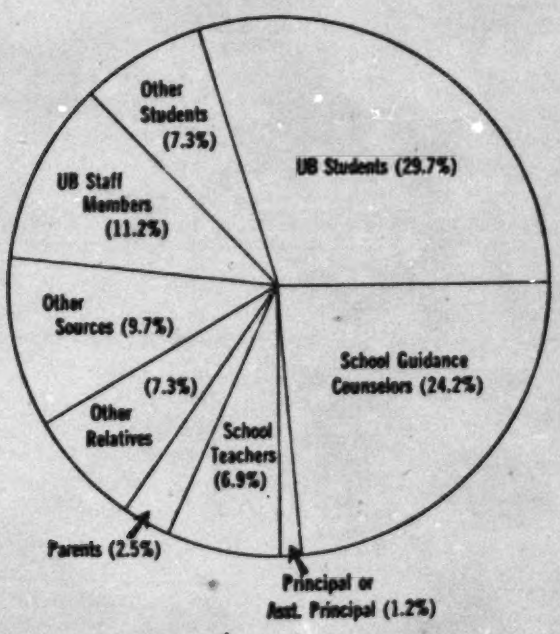

Figure 6

UB denotes Upward Bound

Some of the resulting differences in the UB participants among projects may represent a desirable heterogeneity, but this heterogeneity appears to result from differences in personal convictions or preferences of project staff or from lack of precision in definitions in the legislation and guidelines. This is not to state that ineligible or undeserving students are being served, but that a variety of kinds of disadvantagement are probably now represented in different projects.

C. The Relationships of Student Outcomes to Project Characteristics

Projects with lower proportions of academic risk and/or poverty level students were found to be more likely to achieve the basic goal of high PSE entry rates. Generally, the analyses did not discover any other UB project characteristics related to success. A possible explanation of this pattern of findings, which is supported by observations during site visits, is that different UB processes are used because different types of students are selected, and different students are selected because a UB project has geared its process to that particular type of student. This explanation is quite consistent with the study findings, but to investigate the hypothesis more fully would require different approaches to both design and measurement than those employed in this study.